

Information for Parents: Frequently Asked Questions

How can I support my bilingual child at home?

- Talk to your child in your home language (See EAL leaflet 'Helping Your Child Be Bilingual').
- If your child is aged 3 - 7, ask your school/nursery if you can watch the EAL film 'It's your help that counts' - you might be able to watch it in your language.
- Read and talk about dual language books with your child. Your school and public library should be able to access dual language books in most languages. Use your home language to talk about the pictures and ask questions e.g. Who? What? Where? Why? When?
- Talk to your child about their day; encourage them to tell you about one thing that they learned/did that day.
- Talk about class subjects; link this to your home country / culture if possible e.g. similarities and differences.
- Play turn-taking games such as I-Spy, Snap, Dominoes, Lotto, Snakes and Ladders, practising language involved. Ask your child's class teacher or EAL teacher how to play these games if you're not sure. They will also be able to explain why these games are good for learning.

What if my child or I don't understand the homework?

Please see EAL website for more information - under 'Information for Parents'

Homework is a very important part of your child's schooling. Homework helps children remember their learning. If you or your child are not sure what to do:

- Ask the teacher for more information
- Speak to the EAL teacher or BSA if available
- Write a message in your child's home-school diary; it may be possible to have it translated.

Are there any extra English classes for my child?

There are after-school ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes for pupils in S3 to S6. Please ask your child's school/and/or EAL Teacher for more details.

Should we speak to our child in English at home?

Your child uses English all day and all week at school. Outside of school it is important for your child to use their home language to keep this strong. This helps both your home language and English to develop. Talking about your child's school work in your home language is also helpful for your child's educational development. It is important that your child hears good examples of English language (See EAL leaflet 'Helping Your Child Be Bilingual').

How can I tell that my child is progressing with their English?

Children are all at different stages of their English Language development; some children are new to English and some are advanced learners. Typically, it can take up to 2 years to develop social and everyday English. Some children go through a 'silent period' and build up to using single words, extending these to simple phrases.

It can take up to 10 years to develop more academic English language and understanding. Even though children may appear to be fluent English speakers in conversation, they may still be developing their use and understanding of English when doing more complicated tasks.

Your child's EAL teacher and/or BSA will be happy to answer any questions.

Should I defer my child's entry to Primary 1 to give him/her more time to learn English?

(If you defer your child, it means that your child will stay in nursery for another year before starting school).

As each child has individual needs, it is important that you talk about this decision with your child's Nursery and/or EAL teacher and/or BSA. However research has shown that there is no real benefit from delaying entry to school if the child is ready. Also, we do not routinely advise children to defer starting school if being new to English is the only reason. Your child will be able to learn English in school.

My child is new to Scottish schools and has previously been to school in another country; what year group will they be going into?

In Scotland, children are usually placed in age-appropriate year groups. It is important to provide as much information about previous schooling as possible. This is so schools can plan for your child's education appropriately. On entry, schools usually ask for your child's date of birth as well as age. Please speak to your child's school/EAL teacher/BSA for more information.

What are the benefits of bilingualism?

Please read the EAL Service's 'Helping Your Child Be Bilingual' leaflet. Please also refer to the site 'Bilingualism Matters' at <http://www.bilingualism-matters.org.uk> led by Antonella Sorace of the University of Edinburgh.

Where can I get dual language books?

- Ask your child's school and your child's EAL teacher/BSA
- Public Libraries; you can request books at any library
- Some specialist websites (see list of links on EAL web site)
- Some community shops e.g. some Polish shops sell books in Polish/English
- Community language schools sometimes have dual language books for sale

Where can I get information about moving from Nursery to Primary 1 and from Primary 7 to Secondary school?

It is important to ask your child's teacher and EAL staff about this as each school has their own individual transition programme. Check the catchment area of the school you wish your child to attend. If your preferred school is outside the catchment area, you may need to complete a form to request a place. (Catchment area: this is the geographical area for the school.)